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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2497  
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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KE](#)  
SUBJECT: U.S. Support for Kenya's Electoral Process

REF: NAIROBI 1669

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION: In the run up to Kenya's 27 December presidential and parliamentary elections, the USG is heavily engaged to support a free and fair electoral process in order to preserve, broaden and deepen Kenya's democratic gains (see also reftel). Given indications that the vote will be close and potentially contentious, the US Mission is also acting in conjunction with efforts by Kenya's vibrant press, civil society, and credible electoral commission to discourage violence and irregularities. END SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION.

UNDP Multi-Donor Election Assistance Program:  
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¶2. (U) The United States is the largest donor to UNDP's \$11.3 million comprehensive election assistance program, providing nearly \$3 million of funding. There are components of the program focused on combating election-related violence, which include working with the Electoral Commission of Kenya's (ECK) district-level Peace Committees to receive early warning of potential conflicts and to respond to incidents of violence. Other key elements of the program include civic education, media training and monitoring of media coverage, and enhancing the effectiveness of domestic observation efforts. As USAID/Kenya's Democracy & Governance officer is the lead coordinator for all/all donor related election activity, USAID represents the donors on the joint ECK/Donor Steering Committee managing this program.

Election Observers:  
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¶3. (U) The Mission is funding an international election observer team headed by the International Republican Institute (IRI). The team will have about 20 members, and will be headed by former Assistant Secretary Constance Newman. This team will be strategically deployed to high-profile locations and will coordinate with other international observer missions being fielded by the EU and the Commonwealth.

¶4. (U) In addition to the international team, we will field over 50

three-member teams of Mission observers (American and Kenyan staff).

Locations for deployment focus on election "hot spots" where we anticipate the greatest potential for violence or other irregularities as well as constituencies with viable women candidates. As circumstances on the ground evolve, we can continue to adjust our deployment strategy.

15. (U) As part of the Mission's election assistance program, we are providing training and assistance to local NGOs who will be fielding domestic observer teams. Training and assistance will be provided via the UNDP program to the thirteen Kenyan local civil society organizations that have formed the Kenyan Domestic Observers Forum (KEDOF). KEDOF members will deploy observers to the field and are monitoring issues related to violence and women's participation in the political process.

Support to the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK):  
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16. (U) Developing the capacity of the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) lies at the heart of our strategy. The USG funded International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) has been providing support to the ECK since late 2001. Activities focus on providing appropriate technology for more efficient and transparent elections administration while improving the skills of the ECK technical staff. This support additionally includes capacity building and technical assistance to support election administration. Technical assistance includes computerization of the Procurement and Supplies Department, which is responsible for printing and distributing election materials. Assistance will also support implementation of the ECK's restructuring plan, strengthening logistics capacity, and accelerating the transmission and display of results.

Public Outreach and Advocacy:  
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17. (U) The Ambassador has made several high-profile speeches and routinely appears on radio, television and the press to emphasize the importance of ensuring that the democratic process in Kenya is credible and free from violence, intimidation, and hate speech. As described below, the Mission has reacted swiftly and publicly to violence and intimidation directed towards women political candidates. We have also reacted to other recent acts of political violence in the same fashion and will continue to do so.

18. (U) In addition to regularly engaging the press and meeting with civil society, we also continue to meet privately with senior leadership of key parties and with individual candidates to urge them to adhere to the election code of conduct and to speak out against violence and hate speech. It is encouraging that President Kibaki and challenger Raila Odinga each made very strong, non-partisan statements this week about ending violence in Kuresoi. We have also brought specific instances of electoral malpractice to the attention of both camps. When speakers at a pro-Raila rally on the coast used ethnically inflammatory language, we reported this to the party leadership. When we observed provincial officials in a remote area acting on behalf of the President's party in a blatantly partisan manner, we reported that abuse both to party and government officials. There have been other such interventions as well.

¶9. (U) On October 9, the Mission launched the anti-violence "Umoja Pamoja" ('Oneness, Togetherness') campaign, which reached out to youth with a concert by popular Kenyan performers and an original song on the theme of unity and peaceful participation in politics. The music video of the "Umoja Pamoja" song is being used as an outreach tool and youth are encouraged to sign the accompanying pledge of non-violence. The two-month program is working with up to 41 local NGO partners to conduct voter education in all 210 constituencies.

¶10. (U) On October 1, the Ambassador joined with more than 20 other heads of mission in a joint statement emphasizing the diplomatic community's neutral stance in Kenya's elections and the need for a peaceful electoral process. The group also presented a statement of electoral principles.

#### Promoting and Protecting Women Candidates

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¶11. (U) The Mission has been active in promoting the right of women to run for public office. Unfortunately in Kenya, women candidates for political party nominations have been attacked and/or intimidated. In the wake of one such attack, the Ambassador visited the victim at bedside and gave strongly worded remarks condemning the attack and reaffirming the right of women (and of all Kenyans) to stand for political office free of intimidation and violence. The remarks were widely covered in the Kenyan media and generated public censure of the attack (reftel B).

¶12. (U) The Mission is funding a political parties strengthening program implemented by NDI. The program emphasizes the role of women in Kenyan political parties and seeks to make party operations more transparent so women can compete on a level playing field. Over the past year, the program has also provided leadership training for 204 women party members.

¶13. (U) At the community level, the Mission's efforts have successfully increased women's participation in District Peace Committees (DPCs) in North Eastern Province, previously an exclusive male domain. While at the national level, the Mission's political parties strengthening program encourages active participation of women in decision making structures and procedures. To date, four political parties receiving such assistance have developed strategies on affirmative action for women.

¶14. (U) Against this backdrop, on December 10 we garnered nationwide publicity for a summit of over 100 women MP candidates who assembled at the Ambassador's residence to raise awareness for prevention of violence and other issues surrounding women's participation in Kenyan politics.

#### Public Opinion Polling:

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¶15. (U) The Mission is funding national public opinion polling to increase the availability of objective and reliable data and to provide an independent source of verification of electoral outcomes via exit polls. The implementing partner is IRI.

¶16. (SBU) In addition, we were concerned that other widely published public opinion polls, which showed ODM's Raila Odinga well ahead of President Kibaki, did not accurately reflect the true status of the contest. Given the rising political temperature, partially due to use of blatant ethnic appeals by both sides, we were concerned about the reaction of ODM supporters should their

candidate lose in a close outcome when they were led by public opinion polls to expect a landslide victory. The solution involved

quietly reaching out to polling firms and their clients to suggest that poll sampling distribution should be based on the regional distribution of registered voters, not on raw population. Today, the

major polling firms have all adjusted their sampling and limited their responses to those who at least claim to be registered voters.

#### Strengthening Political Parties:

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¶17. (U) The Mission supports a political parties strengthening program implemented by the National Democratic Institute. The program emphasizes the role of women and youth in political parties. In the past year alone, 204 women participated in

leadership training. We are confident that women will continue to hold more prominent leadership positions, both given the elections and the recently enacted Political Party Financing Legislation and we will continue to support political parties with an emphasis on the role women play in such organizations.

¶18. (U) Taken together these efforts make the U.S. a key player in helping influence the electoral process in a constructive direction.

RANNEBERGER